



Senator John J. Bell
Board Chairperson

BOARD OF VISITORS

THE VIRGINIA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF AND THE BLIND
P.O. BOX 2069
STAUNTON, VA 24402-2069

January 5, 2023
Minutes of Meeting

Call to Order: Senator Bell called the meeting to order at 10:41am.

Roll Call of Members: A roll call of members was conducted by introductions.

Senator Bell declared a quorum.

Members Present: Senator John J. Bell, Delegate Sally Hudson, Senator Ghazala F. Hashmi, Mike Asip, Carolyn Berry, Daphne Cox, Ron Lanier, Christine Ogden and Vera Wilson

Members Absent: JH Cline, Jr.

Advisors to the BOV Present: Wanda Council/VDOE, Adam Kane, OAG, and Pat Trice/Superintendent

Advisors to the BOV Absent: None

Senator Bell thanked the Board for their cooperation and flexibility in rescheduling the December quarterly meeting due to an unexpected flu and COVID-19 outbreak at VSDB. Senator Bell expressed appreciation to Ms. Trice for keeping the Board informed of school's closure and working diligently with the local Department of Health to ensure the continued wellbeing of the students and the staff.

Reading and approval of minutes: There were no objections, additions or deletions noted for the minutes of the September 20, 2022 meeting.

Senator Hashmi motioned to approve the meeting minutes from the September 20, 2022 meeting. Mr. Lanier seconded the motion.

The Board of Visitors, being polled, voted to approve the September 20, 2022 meeting minutes as follows:

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------|--------|
| 1. | Senator Bell | AYE |
| 2. | Delegate Hudson | AYE |
| 3. | Senator Hashmi | AYE |
| 4. | Mike Asip | AYE |
| 5. | Carolyn Berry | AYE |
| 6. | JH Cline, Jr. | ABSENT |
| 7. | Daphne Cox | AYE |
| 8. | Ron Lanier | AYE |
| 9. | Christine Ogden | AYE |
| 10. | Vera Wilson | AYE |

The motion carried.

Closed Session

Senator Hashmi moved, pursuant to Virginia Code §2.2-3711 (A)(1) and §2.2-3711 (A)(8) that the Board of Visitors of the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind convene in a closed meeting for the purpose of discussing the annual performance evaluation of Patricia Trice, Superintendent. Mr. Asip seconded the motion.

The Board of Visitors, being polled, voted as follows:

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|-----|-----------------|--------|
| 1. | Senator Bell | AYE |
| 2. | Delegate Hudson | AYE |
| 3. | Senator Hashmi | AYE |
| 4. | Mike Asip | AYE |
| 5. | Carolyn Berry | AYE |
| 6. | JH Cline, Jr. | ABSENT |
| 7. | Daphne Cox | AYE |
| 8. | Ron Lanier | AYE |
| 9. | Christine Ogden | AYE |
| 10. | Vera Wilson | AYE |

The motion carried.

The Board of Visitors adjourned to go into a closed session at 10:45am.

The Board of Visitors returned to an open session at 11:02am.

Certification of Closed Meeting

Senator Bell stated that the Board convened in a closed meeting pursuant to a recorded vote on the motion above and in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act. Section 2.2-3712 of the Code of Virginia requires the Board certify that, to the best of each member's knowledge (i) only public business matters lawfully exempt from open meeting requirements under this chapter and (ii) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened were heard, discussed or considered.

Senator Bell requested that any member who believed there was a departure from these requirements state prior to the vote, indicating the substance of the departure that, in his or her judgment, has taken place.

Mr. Lanier motioned that only public business matters lawfully exempt from open meeting requirements and only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened were heard, discussed or considered. Senator Hashmi seconded the motion.

The Board of Visitors being polled, voted as follows:

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|----|-----------------|-----|
| 1. | Senator Bell | AYE |
| 2. | Delegate Hudson | AYE |
| 3. | Senator Hashmi | AYE |
| 4. | Mike Asip | AYE |

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|-----|-----------------|--------|
| 5. | Carolyn Berry | AYE |
| 6. | JH Cline, Jr. | ABSENT |
| 7. | Daphne Cox | AYE |
| 8. | Ron Lanier | AYE |
| 9. | Christine Ogden | AYE |
| 10. | Vera Wilson | AYE |

The motion carried.

Senator Hashmi moved to accept the annual performance evaluation of Patricia Trice, Superintendent, with one change. Delegate Hudson seconded the motion.

The Board of Visitors being polled, voted as follows:

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------|--------|
| 1. | Senator Bell | AYE |
| 2. | Delegate Hudson | AYE |
| 3. | Senator Hashmi | AYE |
| 4. | Mike Asip | AYE |
| 5. | Carolyn Berry | AYE |
| 6. | JH Cline, Jr. | ABSENT |
| 7. | Daphne Cox | AYE |
| 8. | Ron Lanier | AYE |
| 9. | Christine Ogden | AYE |
| 10. | Vera Wilson | AYE |

The motion carried.

Continuing Business

IT Transition Draft Summary - During the General Assembly's 2022 session, legislation was passed to temporarily move VSDB from under the Secretary of Education to the Governor. This change allowed VSDB to be placed under the same ranking as higher institutions and provided additional flexibility in updating VSDB's IT infrastructure. As part of the passed legislation, the Board was tasked to approve a draft of the IT transition plan prior to its review by Governor Youngkin. A reenactment bill will be reviewed during the upcoming General Assembly session that would allow a permanent reassignment from the Secretary of Education to the Governor.

Karen Cole, Owner of Assura, Inc., thanked Senator Bell for his efforts with VSDB's IT transition process that were key to the development of the IT transition procedural manual. Ms. Cole shared that in the past 10 years that Assura, Inc. has worked with VSDB, the technological achievements that have been made have been due to the dedication of VSDB's staff. The current IT environment is functional; however, it is 10 years past where it needs to be. If there is an outage in the network, it takes several days to work with Virginia's IT Agency (VITA) to resolve the issue.

While assigned under the Secretary of Education, VSDB, as a state agency, was limited to utilizing VITA contracts. Higher Institutions across the Commonwealth have a standard contract with very competitive rates from the Virginia Association of State College and University Purchasing Professionals (VASCUPP). VITA's costs are considerably higher, with VSDB spending an additional hundreds of thousands of dollars annually on services that do not cover the scope that is needed. VITA's one size fits all approach does not work well with VSDB's unique users and needs.

Delegate Hudson requested information on the amount that VSDB paid each year to access VITA's services. Ms. Trice shared that Janice Rankin, Director of Operations, could provide that information to the Board.

Ms. Cole discussed the proposed solution of the plan, to add two critical IT positions, re-architect the school network, outsource the security of the school network and co-manage the network with the trusted partner. Senator Bell added that strategically outsourcing resources would provide better service at a lower cost with additional security. VITA's annual contributions to VSDB would provide funding assistance for the additional positions and services from other providers. Several providers have shared a willingness to provide services to VSDB at a much lower cost than market value.

Mike Asip motioned to approve the Assura IT Transition Draft Summary. Christine Ogden seconded the motion.

The Board of Visitors being polled, voted as follows:

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|-----|-----------------|--------|
| 1. | Senator Bell | AYE |
| 2. | Delegate Hudson | AYE |
| 3. | Senator Hashmi | AYE |
| 4. | Mike Asip | AYE |
| 5. | Carolyn Berry | AYE |
| 6. | JH Cline, Jr. | ABSENT |
| 7. | Daphne Cox | AYE |
| 8. | Ron Lanier | AYE |
| 9. | Christine Ogden | AYE |
| 10. | Vera Wilson | AYE |

The motion carried.

Senator Bell stressed the importance of fixing VSDB's technological issues to provide students and staff with all the tools needed to be successful. Senator Bell thanked Ms. Cole for her presentation and acknowledged Virginia's Secretary of Education, Aimee Guidera, and the Senate Finance and House Appropriation Committees for their support in this endeavor.

5-Year Strategic Work Plan Session - Linda Pierce, TEO Consulting, provided a brief overview of VSDB's 5-Year Strategic Plan. Ms. Pierce previously worked with VSDB in 2018 to establish a vision for the plan. Focus groups were held and surveys were sent to students, parents, staff, and the alumni to receive input. The Board reviewed the received feedback to determine the original plan's initial goals and objectives. The finalized plan was voted on in May 2018. Several of the objectives listed on the initial plan have been completed, with others placed on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Ms. Pierce shared that the goal of the Board's work session was to receive input from the Board with a revised draft to be shared at the March quarterly meeting.

Senator Hashmi discussed that as part of the narrative, an identification of alumni success points should be highlighted. Ongoing efforts should continue to focus on alumni engagement and tracking VSDB students' long-term successes. Ms. Cox stressed the importance of alumni involvement and addressed the challenges of not being able to identify alumni since there is no alumni database. She stated that social media is currently the main source of information. Ms. Trice supported an overarching goal to enhance the involvement of alumni interaction with students. In addition, Ms. Trice cautioned that VSDB does not have the resources to provide assistance for the Deaf Alumni Association or the Blind Alumni Association to track or to develop an alumni database.

Ms. Trice shared that once the Main Hall exterior project was finished, stakeholder meetings would be held to justify the renovation of the interior of the building. Once complete, Main Hall will house several departments including Human Resources, Operations, Public Safety, and the Superintendent's Office with space to support national conferences. Ms. Trice stated that her vision is to develop Byrd Hall into VSDB's Workforce Development Center. The concept is to create a "makerspace" within Byrd Hall in order to provide on-campus work experiences at all levels for students and better prepare them for off-site work experiences and future employment. This space would include VSDB businesses such as the school store, a 3-D printer lab and a possible on-site printing and copying space. Establishing the VSDB Workforce Development Center would provide opportunities for increased community partnerships. Senator Bell thanked Ms. Trice for her vision and shared that the House Appropriations Committee takes a retreat each year to tour different agencies. These retreats have previously been held at institutions such as JMU, Virginia Tech and UVA. Senator Bell added that he would like for VSDB to host the Committee. The retreat would benefit and provide opportunities to grow the school. Ms. Trice thanked Senator Bell for his suggestion and shared that VSDB will continue to be sustainable as long as specialized programs are built that cannot be found anywhere else.

Mr. Asip discussed that the goal for increased student enrollment should include an objective with a realistic percentage of growth target. Senator Bell suggested that instead of a growth target, a goal be developed to provide resources and meet the needs of services and education offered at VSDB. Mr. Asip added that a quantified increase should be added in terms of 5 years. The plan should include ways to serve more students. Senator Hashmi agreed the goal to increase student enrollment needed wordsmithing. Children across the Commonwealth should be able to access the services that VSDB provides. Ms. Wilson shared that her child was diagnosed Deaf in 2003. The Regional Board never shared information with her family regarding VSDB. If more families were notified of VSDB, enrollment numbers may be higher. Ms. Cox agreed that the referral process was extremely challenging. Wanda Council, Department of Education, shared that prior to the pandemic, Ms. Trice traveled to regional meetings to meet with Special Education Directors to present information on VSDB. In school systems, the LEA will meet with the families in the IEP process; however, many of the school staff meeting with families do not know about VSDB. VSDB's Outreach Director, Robin Bliven, is working to increase awareness of VSDB and share information on the programs that are available with teachers and school systems.

Senator Bell thanked Ms. Pierce for her presentation.

Policy Updates: Tessy Schlemmer, Human Resources Director, introduced Nicholas Hall, Public Safety Director, as the proponent of the Policy G014.2 - Visitors on Campus and G042 - Campus Access and Civil Protests/Demonstrations. Mr. Hall provided a summary and discussed the revisions that had been made to each policy.

Ronald Lanier moved to approve Policy GO14.2 - Visitors on Campus. Mike Asip seconded the motion.

The Board of Visitors being polled, voted as follows:

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|----|-----------------|--------|
| 1. | Senator Bell | AYE |
| 2. | Delegate Hudson | AYE |
| 3. | Senator Hashmi | AYE |
| 4. | Mike Asip | AYE |
| 5. | Carolyn Berry | AYE |
| 6. | JH Cline, Jr. | ABSENT |
| 7. | Daphne Cox | AYE |

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|-----|-----------------|-----|
| 8. | Ron Lanier | AYE |
| 9. | Christine Ogden | AYE |
| 10. | Vera Wilson | AYE |

The motion carried.

Senator Hashmi moved to approve G042 - Campus Access & Civil Protests/Demonstrations. Christine Ogden seconded the motion.

The Board of Visitors being polled, voted as follows:

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------|--------|
| 1. | Senator Bell | AYE |
| 2. | Delegate Hudson | AYE |
| 3. | Senator Hashmi | AYE |
| 4. | Mike Asip | AYE |
| 5. | Carolyn Berry | AYE |
| 6. | JH Cline, Jr. | ABSENT |
| 7. | Daphne Cox | AYE |
| 8. | Ron Lanier | AYE |
| 9. | Christine Ogden | AYE |
| 10. | Vera Wilson | AYE |

The motion carried.

Reports

Superintendent's Report: Pat Trice, Superintendent, reviewed the information provided in the Enrollment Report in the Board's meeting materials and shared that current enrollment totaled 64 students. The marketing efforts that have been made by the Foundation have supported admissions and assisted with the large number of inquiries and requests received for tours from across the Commonwealth, the country and the world. During the first semester, VSDB had a historic record-breaking enrollment of 20 students. Several families moved to Virginia and the Staunton area for their children to attend the school. Over the last two years, large graduation classes have lowered the overall student count. Ms. Trice shared that she anticipated the second semester's enrollment numbers would match the fall.

The 2022-2023 school year started well with lessened pandemic restrictions and a return to normalcy. With guidance from the local Virginia Department of Health, the residential halls began with one student to a room with the anticipation of adding roommates as enrollment grew. After Thanksgiving break, VSDB faced a surge in student and staff absences due to flu and COVID-19 exposures. As a precautionary measure, the campus closed for one week for a deep clean and sanitization of the school and residential buildings. The following week, an incoming ice storm caused an early dismissal and closure. All are excited to be back on campus after Winter Break and are hopeful for a healthy start to the new year.

During the Board's last meeting, several positions across departments remained vacant. Human Resources has filled open positions in the Residential Halls, School and Operations. VSDB is positioned well for continued growth.

Ms. Trice shared that she was optimistic that VSDB would be able to offer a two-week enrichment summer program for the students this year. Teachers are being canvassed to determine their interest in providing a one-week or two-week program. The summer program is volunteer based and dependent on staff's involvement.

VSDB's one-week closure impacted the informational meeting that was scheduled to take place in December for stakeholders of the 'Unified VSDB' formerly 'One School' plan. The timeline of the plan will be readjusted, with the informational meeting rescheduled for February.

During Winter Break, a drop in temperatures caused pipes to freeze and burst in Battle Hall and Main Hall. Both buildings sustained water damage. Ms. Trice shared that she planned to work on the justification for Main Hall's interior renovation with the intention of turning Byrd Hall into VSDB's Workforce Development Center. Main Hall's exterior renovation is expected to be complete in the spring.

Senator Bell thanked Ms. Trice for her report and continued dedication to VSDB.

Budget Report: Janice Rankin, Director of Operations, presented the financial reports. The budget should be at 42% and is currently at 38%.

During the IT Transition Draft Plan presentation, the amount that VSDB paid annually to the Virginia Information Technologies Agency (VITA) was requested. Ms. Rankin shared that she would provide that information to the Board during their next meeting.

The new payroll system, Cardinal, went into effect in October. The Business office continues to work through ongoing issues and challenges with the system.

Ms. Trice provided accolades to Tessy Schlemmer, Director of Human Resources and Ms. Rankin and their departments for working countless additional hours through vacancies in their departments and the difficulties with the Cardinal system.

Human Resources Report: Tessy Schlemmer, Director of Human Resources, thanked the Board for their work on Ms. Trice's annual evaluation and shared appreciation to Ms. Rankin and her team for their dedication and work during the breaks to process the payroll.

VSDB's current employee count totals 164 employees, with an Accounting Supervisor, HR Generalist, Housekeeper, Teacher Assistant, Interpreter, Residential Advisor and Counselor hired since September. The Sign-on Bonus and Referral Bonus Programs will continue, with employee turnover remaining low.

The state will move to the new PageUp ATS recruitment platform in late January. Human Resources continues to work on learning the new software. Vacant positions posted on VSDB's website will be taken down in January and reposted to the new platform once it goes live.

Demographic and Time to Hire reports were not prepared for the Board's December meeting due to the information in the reports remaining largely unchanged. Ms. Schlemmer planned to share an updated report with the Board during the March quarterly meeting.

Since September, 12 positions have been filled, classified employee annual performance evaluations completed and progress made on system upgrades to recruitment, training and Cardinal.

Upcoming projects include continued recruitment for wage and 12-month classified positions, faculty contract renewal, preparation for the Service Award and Retiree Recognition Luncheon and the annual Conflict of Interest report filings by select staff.

Other Business

Two bills will be presented during the General Assembly's 2023 session to address gaps for VSDB in the Code of Virginia. The first includes legislation to establish authoritative language for VSDB to run background checks on employees. The second, would provide a correction for VSDB to maintain authority for a police force on campus. In 2013, VSDB held the same authority as higher education to maintain a police force. The code was since modified and VSDB was left out of the new legislation.

The next quarterly meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 8th, 2023 from 10:30am-2:00pm on VSDB's campus in the Chapel.

Public Comment

There was no public comment provided.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 1:36pm.